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Class JK 613

Book 1216

PROGRESS OF WORK BY JOINT RECLASSIFICATION COM-  
MISSION—EXTENDING TIME FOR FINAL REPORT.

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DECEMBER 17, 1919.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed.

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*U.S. Congress, House,*  
Mr. LEHLBACH, from the Committee on Reform in the Civil Service, submitted the following

R E P O R T.

[To accompany H. J. Res. 263.]

The Committee on Reform in the Civil Service, to which was referred House joint resolution 263, reports the same to the House with a recommendation that the resolution be agreed to.

The reasons upon which your committee bases its recommendation are found in the subjoined statement of the joint commission.

The Joint Commission on Reclassification of Salaries and its staff of retained experts and employees detailed from the departments are now rounding up their work. They are driving toward the completion of the largest and most important classification of positions and standardization of salaries ever undertaken.

All told, the commission has been obliged to study 107,000 positions of employees of all ranks in scientific, administrative, clerical, skilled trades, and other services. The commission's jurisdiction is limited to the positions in the Federal departments and independent establishments, and the municipal government, within the District Columbia. But the total of these positions is over 30,000 more than have been studied in any previous classification of positions of a city, a State, or a nation. It also embraces a greater variety.

These positions are those of the employees of the central Government of the United States, and therefore the work of the commission is of really great national importance.

The law requires the commission to report such proposed reclassification of positions and readjustment of compensation as will "provide uniform and equitable pay for the same character of employment." This meant equitable not alone to the employees, but also to the taxpayers. This mandate, of course, forbade anything like guesswork. It required a most careful comparison of the duties of the thousands of positions comprised in the various classes of the various services. If the classification was to be trustworthy, it necessitated painstaking investigation and intensive study. This complicated work has been carried forward according to a comprehensive program adopted after careful deliberation with the counsel of experts and on the basis of experience elsewhere in modern, scientific, and practical reclassification.

The basic work of classification is now at the stage where specifications of the various classes of positions in each service are being issued and studied by Cabinet officers and other department heads, and by representative committees of administrators and of employees. Each set of these class specifications includes: (1) The title of the class of positions; (2) a statement of the duties of the positions in the class regardless of their departmental location; (3) a statement of the qualifications required for

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the performance of these duties; and (4) suggested lines of promotion, on a merit basis, from the class and to the class.

These specifications are the absolutely indispensable basis for the hearings now being held by the commission—hearings which will save much time for Congress later. At these hearings briefs are presented and suggestions are offered on two topics: (1) The classification itself as shown by the specifications, and (2) proposals on salary schedules for the classes specified. Never before in the history of the Government have department heads, administrators, and employees been called on to give such concentrated attention to the duties of and qualifications required for the work of the various classes of positions. Never before have salary proposals been perforce related to specifications.

Heretofore the titles of positions appearing in appropriation bills have had virtually no specifications of duties and qualifications back of them. The absence of such specifications has helped to bring about marked inequalities of pay for the same character of work. Statistics now being compiled for the commission which show the exact facts about the inequalities of pay within each of the various classes of positions. These inequalities have bred unrest in the Government service. The newer Members of the Congress may not appreciate the need for nor the magnitude of the work of this reclassification. But the older Members, on whose initiative the commission was created, were moved by a realization of the need. They realized not only the lack of uniformity in pay for the same work, but also the lack of a scientific standard for fixing salaries.

Parallel to its scientific classification of positions, the commission is carrying forward work on salary schedules. These will as a rule include a minimum and a maximum for each class. For the fixing of the schedule for each class, facts have been gathered and are being studied on the following: (1) Salaries paid outside the Government service in positions where the duties and qualifications are comparable to those of Government positions; (2) minimum, most common, and maximum Government salaries now paid in the District of Columbia; (3) what salaries administrators say are required to secure and to retain efficient employees; (4) what the employees say they think they should receive; (5) changes since 1914 in the cost of living. One important consideration is that of equity in pay not only as between the classes of varying rank within a given service, but as between the classes in the different services.

To gather and to consider comprehensively all the facts involved means a vast amount of detail work. Classifications elsewhere have required years. The Congress gave the present commission months. The act provides that January 12 next is the time for its final report. Its members were appointed last March. The commission proceeded without delay to organize, employ a clerk, and get its work under way. It consulted, besides departmental officials who had taken part in similar work, experts who had been connected with municipal and State classifications both East and West and with the classification since then adopted unanimously by the Parliament of the Dominion of Canada.

The commission retained the firm of American experts who had done the Canadian classification to direct the work as its headquarters staff. It retained also a member of the staff of a municipal civic agency to be in immediate charge of special economic and employment research. It secured from the departments, as authorized by the act, the detail of a statistician, a staff of classifiers and investigators, and a force of record clerks, stenographers, and typists. The detailed classifiers and investigators as a rule had not had previous experience in classifying positions. But all have worked with a will in applying the principles of a classification on the basis of duties and qualifications. Moreover, the commission has had the assistance of advisory committees of civic leaders, employees, and administrators.

Much night work is being done just now by the commission and its staff. The object is to bring the commission's work to a finish by January 12. To further the work of the commission most of the employees detailed from the departments have deferred taking annual leave until December, but with the intention of taking vacations during the Christmas holidays. While some have already taken vacations, and others have expressed a willingness, if necessary, to forego theirs, it is evident that for 10 days or more the work of the commission must be unavoidably held back.

Part of the night work is being devoted to the completion of specifications—a difficult task which has required many months of study, writing, and editing. These specifications are the necessary preliminary to holding hearings. All of the tentative specifications will be completed by Wednesday evening, December 17. While many hearings have already been held, the remainder are scheduled to follow continuously until December 30.

After the hearings two important steps remain. One is to give careful consideration to criticisms and constructive suggestions received at hearings. The second is to give comprehensive consideration to all of the factors that should go into the recommendations on salaries.

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By holding holiday sessions and night sessions until January 12 it would be possible for the commission to turn in a classification of positions and a schedule of proposed salaries, together with a report of transmittal. But if it were given some more time it could better digest the vast amount of material in hand, compile many statistical exhibits of permanent value, and prepare a matured report of the reasons for its recommendations. These facts properly raise the question of the advisability of extending the time of the commission. Some pertinent points are:

First. No additional appropriation for the work of the commission would be required by an extension of not more than 60 days.

Second. The relation between appropriation bills and the proposed reclassification law defining classes and establishing standard schedules of pay involves installation problems and many others of great practical importance on which the commission must make recommendations.

Third. This Federal classification will undoubtedly set a precedent for others—in States, cities, and industries throughout the Nation.

Under all the circumstances it would be reasonable for the Congress to extend until not later than March 12 the time for the filing of the commission's report on this important and far-reaching piece of work.





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